DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 382 891 CG 026 211

AUTHOR Mathias, Scott A.
TITLE Development of a Working Model for a Private Foster Care Agency To Facilitate Planning Considerations Associated with Archetypical Cases Involving an Incarcerated Parent.
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 97p.; Master's Practicum, Nova Southeastern University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Caseworkers; Check Lists; Counseling; *Foster Care; Foster Children; Guidelines; Parent Rights; *Prisoners; *Social Work; Social Workers
IDENTIFIERS *Case Management; *Incarcerated Parents; Individualized Service Plans

ABSTRACT

Foster care cases involving an incarcerated parent can present unique challenges in planning and case management for caseworkers. Incarcerated parents are expected to maintain communication and contact with their children and caseworkers in order to prevent termination of their parental rights. Agency caseworkers are often not trained to navigate the obstacles to case management associated with an incarcerated parent. This paper presents a working model derived from the suggestions of agency caseworkers and of current literature to act as a reference and training tool for agency workers. A survey checklist composed of prominent suggestions from the working model is appended. The checklist was used to assess the number of suggestions used by the caseworkers who worked with such cases prior to and after the administration of the working model. Overall, there were more suggestions reportedly being used by caseworkers on the second administration of the survey checklist. Although only slight increases in the number of suggestions used in case management were noted in this project, the working model has promising potential for use as a training tool for case workers who have had relatively little experience working with foster care cases involving an incarcerated parent. (Author/JE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 382 891

Development of a Working Model for a Private Foster Care Agency to Facilitate Planning Considerations Associated with Archetypical Cases Involving an Incarcerated Parent

by

Scott A. Mathias

Cohort 5F

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A Practicum Project Report Presented to the
Master's Program in Life Span Care and Administration
in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Masters of Science

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
1994

CG026211

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. MATHIAS

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ABSTRACT

Development of a working model for a private foster care agency to facilitate planning considerations associated with archetypical cases involving an incarcerated parent. Mathias, Scott A., 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Masters Program in Life Span Care and Administration. Descriptors: Incarcerated Parents/Foster Care/Case Management/Working Model/Visitation/Correspondence/Telephone Contact/Individual Service Plan.

Foster care cases involving an incarcerated parent can present unique challenges in planning and case management for caseworkers. Incarcerated parents are expected to maintain communication and contact with their children and caseworkers in order to prevent termination of parental rights. Agency caseworkers are often not trained to navigate the obstacles to case management associated with an incarcerated parent.

This author developed a working model using the suggestions of agency caseworkers and of current literature to act as a reference and training tool for agency workers. A survey checklist was also developed that was used to assess the number of suggestions used by the caseworkers who worked with such cases prior to and after the administration of the working model. The survey checklist was composed of prominent suggestions from the working model.

Overall, there were more suggestions reportedly being used by caseworkers on the second administration of the survey checklist. Although only slight increases in the number of suggestions used in case management were noted in this project, the working model has promising potential for use as a training tool for case workers who have had relatively little experience working with foster care cases involving an incarcerated parent.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1.	Background	5
	Profile of the Staff	7
	Profile of the Author	8
2.	Study of the Problem	11
	Problem Statement	11
	Documentation of the Problem in the Agency	13
	Factors Contributing to the Problem	17
	Analysis of the Problem and Literature Review	19
	Importance of Contact	19
	Incarcerated Parents and Placement in Foster Care	20
	Obstacles to Effective Foster Care Services	23
3.	Goals and Objectives	29
	Goals	29
	Objectives	30
4.	Solution Strategies	32
	Existing Programs and Models	32
	Ways Caseworkers Presently Manage Obstacles	32
	Suggestions from the Literature for Managing Obstacles	35
	(a) Visitation	38
	(b) Telephone Contacts	43

(c) Correspondence 44

Solution Strategy and Plan for Implementation 47

Rationale 49

5. Results and Discussion 53

Summary of Project Procedures 53

Results 56

Discussion 65

Implications and Conclusions 68

6. Appendix A 70

7. Appendix B 73

8. Appendix C 80

9. Appendix D 90

10. Appendix E 93

11. References 95

Chapter 1

BACKGROUND

The setting in which this practicum project was developed, implemented and evaluated is a Christian foster care agency centered primarily in the Northeastern United States with thirteen offices in five different states. The foster children placed through the agency range in age from infancy through the age of twenty-one years. The placement goals of the children include reunification of the children with their legal families, emancipation through supervised independent living, placement with an adoptive family, or long term foster care. While each office tends to serve a distinct population of foster children and their families, each office must follow the policies and procedures established by the agency administration as well as the regulations set by each respective state. For instance, one agency office serves primarily medically needy infants and young children, another office serves mostly teenagers and school aged children with behavioral difficulties.

The agency, which was incorporated as a private, non-profit company in 1982, originally consisted of a single office. Through program development the agency has grown in the past twelve years to its present size serving approximately 450 children placed in some 225 foster families. The mission of the agency has been to provide specialized foster care services for

children who might otherwise be placed in more restrictive or institutional settings. The primary objective of the agency is to promote reunification of legal family members, whenever possible, with other placement options serving as alternatives when reunification is not an option.

As a private agency, the company contracts with individual counties through the Offices of Children and Youth Services and other related county agencies within each respective state to provide foster care services for children in need of placement outside of the home. County contracts are developed by agency Regional Directors with the assistance of the local Program Coordinators. The agency recruits, approves and trains foster parents in a particular region to meet the special needs of the children needing placement. Once a contract has been developed between a county and the agency, the county makes referrals of children who need placement, and the agency then tries to match the needs of the children with the skills of the foster families available. As a child is placed by the Program Coordinator with a foster family, the case is then assigned to an agency Caseworker so that services for the child and the legal family can be arranged.

Profile of the Staff

Upon the initial incorporation of the agency a Board of Directors consisting of three to nine individuals was established in the initial organization of the corporation with the responsibilities of employing the President, approving policies and procedures, and monitoring all financial transactions. These individuals form the governing body of the agency. The primary administrators of the company are the President and the Chief Executive Officer who direct the development and implementation of agency programs. Acting as liaisons between the central corporate administration and support staff and the distal agency offices are five Regional Directors. The Regional Directors oversee the program operations of the thirteen individual offices; each office being supervised by a Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator supervises the policy implementation of the office staff which is comprised of caseworkers, social workers and clerical staff. It is the caseworkers' responsibility to implement the policies and procedures of the agency and to provide the services in partnership with the foster parents that are necessary to meet the placement goal for each particular case.

Each caseworker is expected to have at least a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work or a directly related field as well as two years or related work experience. Program Coordinators are

expected to have an earned Master's Degree in Social Work or a related field with at least two years of work related experience. At minimum one of those years must include direct staff supervisory experience. Caseworkers, Social Workers, and Program Coordinators constitute what might be considered the "front-line" or direct service professionals within the agency, as they are the individuals who work in immediate contact with the foster children and their legal and foster families. There are no educational requirements for foster parents, although foster families must undergo preservice and inservice training in addition to two home safety checks in order to conclude the approval process.

Profile of the Author

The author was first employed as a Caseworker with this agency in May of 1991. The author was promoted to his present position as Program Coordinator in May of 1993 when the incumbent Program Coordinator within the author's region vacated the position to meet the need for leadership in another office. This author is presently meeting the requirements of educational level for a Program Coordinator through enrollment in Nova Southeastern University; however, the author's present title remains as Program Coordinator (Acting) until this requirement is fulfilled. The author's experience with agency policies and

procedures as well as supervisory experience with foster parents and staff in the past three years has also contributed to the author's promotion to the Program Coordinator position.

As a Program Coordinator, the author assists in the development of agency policies and procedures through attendance at monthly staff meetings with the administration, Regional Directors and all other Programs Coordinators. During these monthly meetings, program changes are discussed and instructions are given to the Program Coordinators and Regional Directors for agency implementation. Since the author is a member of the agency administration, and as his administrators are in support of agency and staff development through the graduate programs of Nova Southeastern University, this practicum project is being undertaken as a proposal for agency procedural development.

The cases presently assigned to each caseworker can be extremely diverse, and they are reflective of the family conditions that warrant the use of foster care services such as the age and therapeutic needs of the child, the needs of the legal family, the reason for placement and the anticipated length of the placement. Case management tasks include the construction and implementation of Individual Services Plans for each child, the scheduling of visits between each child and legal family members, the transportation of foster children to legal family visits, the monitoring of correspondence between

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

foster children and their legal families, and the arranging of therapeutic and rehabilitative services for the foster child and members of the legal family when indicated. These considerations plus a host of other unique situations make the process of case management a continual planning challenge.

Chapter 2

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Statement

Management of foster care cases where a parent is incarcerated often requires that novel planning, communication, and transportation considerations be addressed by agency staff in order to facilitate the goals of the case plan and to promote the reunification of the family. Incarcerated parents are often dependent on others to arrange for visitations and communication with their children due to their confinement and immobility (Beckerman, 1989). Currently our agency manages these cases on an Ad Hoc, or situational basis with little guidance and few standards of action. Planning, communication and transportation obstacles can cause delays in gaining services for foster children, and these obstacles can consume a large amount of the workers' time, since workers must learn ways to manage these obstacles with little formal guidance from the agency. This means that caseworkers are frequently "re-creating the wheel" as they learn to plan for cases involving incarcerated parents.

There are several facets of case planning that require special consideration and attention in cases involving incarcerated parents: separate Individual Service Plan (ISP) meetings must be scheduled for incarcerated parents because all

parties invited to the ISP meeting are not permitted to enter the prison; separate visitations from other families must often be arranged because the visitation location frequently must be within the prison; visitation times and durations vary according to the facility where the parent is imprisoned; and the names of the persons who will be visiting the parent often must be on the inmate's approved visitors list in order to gain entry into the prison.

Communication concerns include limited times when legal parents may call from the prison, restrictions from using toll-free 800 telephone numbers, since prison regulations only permit inmates to call collect (toll free telephone numbers are offered to legal family members for each office because calls to caseworkers are frequently long distance toll calls), and a lack of access to incarcerated parents. The workers generally must call the parent's counselor first in order to establish phone contact with the inmate. Another communication consideration is that many of the casework transactions involving the signing of necessary documents for the foster child's file must be accomplished by mail, as personal contacts are limited.

Transportation concerns generally involve great distances, as correctional facilities are located throughout the state. This often requires the workers to set aside an entire whole day

to transport a particular child to a visitation location on site at a prison.

Many of these obstacles are counter-productive to case management tasks for foster care, but many of them have been imposed as the results of prison security procedures and regulations. The problem is that agency caseworkers presently are not trained to address these special circumstances so as to maximize the amount of communication that can occur between the parent, the child and the caseworker.

Documentation of the Problem in the Agency

In order to more thoroughly document and examine the obstacles in case planning that are experienced by agency caseworking staff and the ways in which they presently deal with these obstacles, a survey form consisting of open-ended questions was created and distributed to all of the caseworkers in 11 of the agency offices. Copies of the survey and cover letter are presented in Appendix A. In total, survey forms, which asked questions concerning cases involving incarcerated parents of foster children, were distributed to 37 caseworkers in 11 agency offices. One office was excluded because it only serves young adults living in a supervised independent living arrangement. Another office was excluded because it is relatively new and is still under development by the agency.

The survey requested that caseworkers identify the number of cases they have had on their caseload in the past three years in which a parent of a foster child has been incarcerated. The caseworkers were then asked to list any obstacles they have experienced while providing case management services in such cases, and how they have dealt with these obstacles. Of the 37 surveys handed out, 17 caseworkers returned completed survey forms for a response rate of 46 %.

Four of the 17 surveys returned reported that the worker had no contact with cases involving an incarcerated parent, but 13 of the respondents (76 %) had at least one case involving an incarcerated parent within the past three years. Thus, at least 13 of the 37 workers, or about 35 % of the agency caseworking staff have had some experience working with incarcerated parents with children in foster care. Four of the 13 reported that they experienced no difference in planning for cases where a parent is incarcerated (31 %), but 9 of the 13 respondents (69 %) said that tney did experience some obstacles that are unique in the planning of foster care cases when a parent is incarcerated.

Responses to the survey identifying case management obstacles were itemized and categorized and are presented in Table 1 below. Caseworker's responses to how they presently manage these obstacles will be presented in Chapter Four.

TABLE 1

Obstacles and Special Circumstances
Identified by Staff Members
(N=13)

Response	Number of Respondents
Facility visitation restrictions and non-conducive visiting environments.	7
Time limits and restricted visitation times at prisons.	5
Difficulties getting legal documents signed and special planning for case meetings.	5
Extensive travel distances for visits and travel arrangements.	4
Telephone usage restrictions for inmates.	3
Delays in plans for reunification.	1

The most frequently mentioned obstacles were the time limits on visits and restricted prison visitation schedules, considerations for gaining entrance into a prison facility, the physical arrangements of the visitation areas in the prisons, and obstacles to the arrangement of case planning meetings and getting legal documents signed. Respondents noted that visitation rooms in the prisons are often not conducive to parent-child interactions. Chairs are located too closely together, physical contact is limited and toys are not allowed so the children play with vending machines and climb on

furniture. The activities of the children are limited because there often are no play areas. The waiting period to gain entrance to visitation rooms may be as long as two hours which is difficult with children. Respondents to the survey noted that baby items, toys, books and food are often restricted from the prison visiting room. Respondents also noted that the minimum or maximum time limits for visitations are problematic. They range from as short as one hour to a minimum duration of at least one hour.

One respondent mentioned that visitors must have their names on the inmate's approved visitors list, and another noted that visitors must bring photo identification to the prison to gain entry to the visitation room. One respondent also noted that visits to prisons must be arranged individually and that making these arrangements tends to be time consuming.

Respondents noted on the survey that they had to schedule Individual Service Plan (ISP) meetings for incarcerated parents separate from other attending parties, because the other parties associated with the construction of the child's ISP are not able to gain access to the prison visitation room, and the inmate is usually not permitted to be released to attend a meeting elsewhere. One respondent reported that legal documents requiring the incarcerated parent's signature must be mailed, since legal documents may not be signed during normal visitation

times with the parent. Two respondents reported that the need to mail legal documents for case planning and services to the parent can cause delays in getting such documents signed.

Other obstacles commonly reported involved the distance that must be traveled to the prison location and difficulties surrounding inmates' telephone usage. Respondents noted that prison facilities are frequently far away from agency offices, and that telephone usage restrictions for inmates require caseworkers to first call an inmate's counselor in order to contact the inmate. One respondent noted that inmates are often not permitted to use the agency's toll free 1-800 telephone number, but instead must call collect. One final survey response concerning obstacles was that plans for reunification must be delayed until the parent is released from prison and settled in the community. This is assuming that this parent is the only one who is interested in regaining custody of the children.

Factors Contributing to the Problem

Many of the obstacles identified by agency caseworkers are the direct result of regulations imposed by prison facilities in order to maintain security. Time limits, entrance restrictions for visitors, controlled visitation environments, and telephone restrictions for inmates are all necessary procedures from the

stand point of the prison, but it is apparent from the survey responses that these regulations may hamper case planning efforts for agency caseworkers and restrict the amount of communication that the incarcerated parent can have with his or her child and caseworker.

Traveling distance becomes an obstacle for caseworkers when the foster home and the prison facility are geographically an extensive distance apart. Some survey respondents noted that visitations at times are not able to be arranged on a regular basis due to the extensive travel time involved, and so visitations are threatened when distance is a factor. Unfortunately, many of the prison facilities are located in remote locations and are dispersed throughout the states in which the agency has offices. Regulations of the prison facility, delays in a child's permanency planning due to the tentativeness of prison release dates for incarcerated parents, and distance are all factors that hamper the case management of caseworkers. They are also factors which are not easily changed. Although these factors present themselves as obstacles for this agency's caseworkers, current literature will need to be consulted to determine if these problems occur in other organizations involved with serving incarcerated parents and their children.

Analysis of the Problem and Literature Review

Importance of Contact

Casework that focuses on the goal of reunification is mandated by law for all children placed in foster care. The federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272) requires that diligent efforts be made to try to reunify all foster children with their legal families through the implementation of service plans regardless of the living situation of the legal parents (Beckerman, 1991, 1994). Beckerman noted that case plans must be developed within 60 days of the child's placement in foster care, and that periodic reviews must be conducted in order to determine the progress made towards the goals of the service plan. Beckerman (1994) reported that three types of activities can facilitate incarcerated parents' involvement with their children and also meet the prerequisite conditions stipulated in the case plan: (a) correspondence between caseworkers and incarcerated parents, (b) telephone calls between caseworkers and parents, and (c) notification of parents of upcoming court hearings. Visitation between incarcerated parents and their children is also important because it demonstrates the interest of the parent to maintain ties with the family.

Visits provide the most intimate possibility for communication, not only because they may be the most

confidential, but because the physical proximity and the ability to see the other person allows for the fullest expression of thoughts and feelings (Osbourne Association, 1993). Telephone contacts and correspondence can also be utilized as adequate alternatives when regular visitation is not possible, or they may be supplemental to visitations.

Beckerman (1991) remarked that the absence of contact over a specified time period may be interpreted by the court and child-welfare agencies as parental disinterest and as evidence of permanent neglect or abandonment, and so can lead to termination of parental rights hearings for the incarcerated parent. The courts may be less inclined to terminate the rights of a parent who does everything possible while incarcerated to provide parental support (Osbourne Association, 1993).

Incarcerated Parents and Placement in Foster Care

More than one million Americans are incarcerated, and 2.6 million are on probation or parole, constituting about two percent of the entire national population (Rudel & Hayes, 1990). According to the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena, California, the population of children of imprisoned parents has risen from 21,000 in 1978 to one million in 1990, and that number could reach two million by the year 2000 (Huie, 1992).

Eighty percent of the nation's incarcerated women are mothers of dependent children, and between 70 and 90 % of them are single parents (Hinds, 1993; Huie, 1992). About 85 % of imprisoned women had custody of their children before they were incarcerated (Church, 1990; Huie, 1992). In contrast, Church claimed that 60 % of male state prisoners are fathers, and less than half had custodial responsibility. An historic study by Zelba (1964) showed that 81 % of the incarcerated mothers surveyed indicated that their intention was to assume the responsibilities of the mother role upon their release from prison.

Beckerman (1994) reported that when a father is incarcerated, the responsibility of caring for his children is usually assumed by the mother, but when a mother is incarcerated, the father seldom assumes parental responsibilities. Beckerman (1991) claimed that incarceration typically has a greater destructive impact on the family lives of women prisoners, since the absence of the mother often leaves her children inadequately cared for, and so she may be forced to place her children in foster care.

A majority of children of female prisoners are cared for by extended family members, usually grandparents, fathers or other relatives (Huie, 1992). Beckerman (1991) cited that as many as

12 % of incarcerated mothers have children who are in foster care (Henriques, 1982: McGowan & Blumenthal, 1976, 1978; Stanton, 1980). For children who had not been placed in foster care prior to their parent's incarceration, Kiser (1991) claimed that placement tended to occur in unusual circumstances such as a child being so young that he or she would require constant care, or a mother had so many children that family members could take care of them only with extreme hardship to themselves. Thus, as the number of incarcerations increases, and subsequently the number of parents imprisoned increases, there are more children who will be in need of foster care placement.

To maintain parental rights, parents are expected to show continued interest in their children by maintaining frequent contact with them and their caseworkers and to plan for their children's future (Beckerman, 1991). Beckerman added that the conditions of imprisonment do not freely support regular contact between incarcerated parents and their children, nor do they allow parents to readily participate in service planning for the children, especially when considering the tentativeness of post-release living arrangements and the uncertainty of an actual release date. Beckerman (1994) suggested that incarcerated parents need to be informed of their parental rights and responsibilities and the impact that their absence from permanency planning for their children in foster care can have.

Beckerman (1991) also claimed that the length of the parent's prison term may hamper immediate reunification with the children and so may conflict with the popular view of foster care as a short-term solution.

Although much of the literature concerning incarcerated parents and their children focuses on the mother's role, this author submits that regardless of gender, an incarcerated parent's involvement in his or her children's lives is significantly hampered, especially if the children are placed in foster care.

Obstacles to Effective Foster Care Services

Many of the problems identified by the caseworkers in this practicum site have been noted by researchers in related fields involved with incarcerated parents. Rubin (1987) noted that contact between mothers and children is often hampered because women's facilities in a state, like men's, are frequently placed in remote locations where public transportation may be inaccessible and private transportation expensive. Distance between where the children are placed and the parent is incarcerated can make visitation more difficult and possibly infeasible (Beckerman, 1991; Church, 1990; Hinds, 1993).

In a survey of state prison policies, Hairston (1989) noted that inmates may be permitted as few as two visits per month or

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

as many as six per week, and visits may be restricted to as little as one hour in some states. Palmer (1991) noted that many states only permit prisoners to see those persons who have been previously approved by the prison administration. Palmer also claimed that control of prison visitation is within the prison officials' discretion, and that this control is not subject to judicial reversal unless a clear abuse of discretion is indicated.

Kiser (1991) noted that the duration of a visit may be extended or visitation to the prison suspended if a head count of prisoners failed to clear. The Osbourne Association (1993) noted that several times per day the prison activities cease while count of the prisoners is taken. When the count is "right" or "clear" (the number of inmates counted is correct), the movement in the facility can resume. If visitors do not arrive before the mid-day count (in most facilities sometime between 11:00 am and 1:00 pm), the inmate can not be moved to the visiting area until the count is cleared, which could last as long as two hours. Kiser (1991) stated that this could lead to problems for family members who have traveled far to visit, who are on a tight schedule or who are dependent on others for transportation.

Beckerman (1989) also suggested that the cost and inconvenience to agencies for arranging visits may also be

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

significant, and there are often no established or clear procedures for providing these services. Beckerman noted that caseworkers may be expected to manage a certain number of cases, but the time spent transporting children to prisons for visits can strain staff time and agency resources. Beckerman concluded that even when there are written state or agency policies, their operationalization is typically left to the discretion of the caseworkers, and so the incarcerated parent is dependent on others to arrange visitation and to facilitate involvement in case planning and case reviews.

Hairston (1989) reported that in most instances the focus of the correctional facility during visits is on the adult's or inmate's responsibility for supervising children and controlling their behavior. Hairston claimed that in at least four states, failure to control children's behavior is reason to terminate the visit. Hairston went on to point out that restrictions on social interaction between parent and children during visits focus on discipline and control often without provision of child centered activities. The Osbourne Association (1993) added that there may be little ability to have a private conversation due to the physical barriers and surveillance by correction officers.

Visitors may be subject to inquiry or search in order to be reasonably certain that no weapons, drugs or other contraband

articles are being brought into the institution (Palmer, 1991). Palmer noted that visitors "consent" to the search in order to visit within the prisoner, providing that this is a regulation of the prison facility. Palmer added that this does not warrant a forcible search of the visitor unless there is an adequate basis to believe that contraband is being smuggled into the prison.

The Osbourne Association (1993) reported that each visitor must establish his or her identity in order to gain access to the prison, and many times some form of photo identification is necessary. The age of visitors permitted into the prison unescorted varies from facility to facility, but in general children under the age of eighteen years often are required to be escorted by a responsible adult (Hairston & Hess, 1989). Beckerman (1989) cited that the caseworker is the person in the best position to clarify expectations of child welfare authorities and to explain the responsibilities of all parties involved (Barry & Reid-Green, 1986), and so they should be present at the visiting location.

Many prison facilities restrict the number of telephone calls an inmate can make, and calls frequently need to be made "collect" with the charges being accepted by the answering party (Osbourne Association, 1993). The Osbourne Association claimed that the distance is often great between prisons and the

communities in which the families reside, resulting in substantial telephone bills for the family which could be a financial hardship. The Osbourne Association warned that many families have lost their phone service because they have accumulated such high phone bills as a result of accepting too many long distance calls. This prison policy denies the inmate from being able to use the agency toll free 1-800 telephone numbers offered to other legal family members.

Palmer (1991) stated that restrictions of the privilege to use the mail by prisoners can include limiting the number of persons with whom an inmate can correspond, opening and reading incoming and outgoing material, deleting sections from incoming and outgoing mail, and refusing to mail materials for an inmate or to forward correspondences to an inmate. Palmer noted three rationales for these restrictions. These reasons include facility security such as intercepting escape plots, administrative restrictions due to a lack of personnel to monitor the mail of prisoners, and rehabilitation purposes through the control of people that the inmate can correspond. The Osbourne Association (1993) warned that although few letters are read by prison officials, both letters and telephone calls are subject to monitoring and may be overheard or searched in certain circumstances. Letters sent to or received from an inmate must go through an approval procedure at the prison as

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

well as be processed and delivered by the United States Postal Service. This could lead to delays in getting documents signed by incarcerated parents.

Beckerman (1994) also reported that correctional policies often prohibit inmates from making or receiving direct telephone calls, and so telephone calls from foster care caseworkers must first be directed to the parent's prison counselor. The counselor may then allow the parent to speak.

The responses to the survey have noted several obstacles that are perceived by the agency staff as inhibiting efficient case management in cases involving incarcerated parents. Many of these obstacles are substantiated by available literature concerning communication with incarcerated parents. Unfortunately, many of these barriers are the result of the policies of the prison system itself. It seems likely that foster care services will still need to be compromised for those cases involving incarcerated parents, but perhaps the survey respondents and the literature can provide some insight into ways that creative case management can address these obstacles.

Chapter 3

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals

As discused in the previous chapter, the incarceration of a a parent can lead to barriers that restrict the contact the inmate nas with his or her children. These obstacles also lead to unique challenges in foster care case planning for caseworkers who nave children on their caseloads with incarcerated parents. The presenting problem is that agency caseworkers are not trained to manage the obstacles involved with cases involving a parent who is imprisoned and to facilitate maximum contact between foster children and their incarcerated parents. The goal of this practicum is therefore to train caseworkers who presently have cases involving an incarcerated parent to maximize the resources available to facilitate contact between those parents, their children and their caseworkers, and to increase the number of ways that caseworkers can manage the obstacles to case planning identified in Chapter Two.

Objectives

Based on the goal statement, the objectives to be accomplished within the ten week implementation period are as follows:

1.) To increase the number of ways that caseworkers prepare for travel to a prison facility for legal family visits by 25 % through alternative suggestions as measured by a pre-post-implementation assessment method.

2.) To increase the number of ways that caseworkers can prepare for the logistics of entrance into a prison facility with foster children, the length of visits prescribed and the days and times of visits imposed by prison facilities by 50 % through logical suggestions as measured by a pre-post-implementation assessment method.

3.) To increase the number of ways that caseworkers can plan for Individual Service Plan meetings and for getting legal documents signed by incarcerated parents by 50 % through creative suggestions as measured by a pre-post-implementation assessment method.

4.) To increase the number of possible ways that caseworkers may address telephone restrictions and use telephone contacts creatively in case management by 35 % through innovative suggestions as measured by a pre-post-implementation assessment method.

Chapter 4

SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Existing Programs and Models

Ways Caseworkers Presently Manage Obstacles

The agency caseworkers' responses were itemized and categorized and are presented below in Table 2. The agency caseworkers' suggestions to the agency to address the needs and obstacles related to foster care services for incarcerated parents with children in foster care were also itemized and categorized, and are presented in Table 3 below.

TABLE 2

Ways That Agency Caseworkers Presently Manage Obstacles Identified (N=13)

Response	Number of Respondents
Request special visitation arrangements through the prison.	4
Have regular contact with prison counselors, gather information from family members and referring agency workers.	3
Encourage telephone contact between parent and child.	3
Encourage correspondence between parent and child; send current photos of child to parent.	3
Parents are sent meeting invitations and completed case plans to sign; encourage parent to participate in case planning meeting via telephone.	2
Prepare child for visits according to situation.	1

As Table 2 shows, four of the respondents noted that they contacted the prison facility to make special visitations arrangements for the family of the incarcerated parent. One of the four respondents noted that special visitation times can sometimes be requested through the prison that coincide with the worker's schedule. Three survey respondents noted that they maintain regular contact with the inmate's prison counselor to keep abreast of events occurring within the facility, or they gather needed information from other family members and referring agency workers. Three workers said that they encourage telephone contacts between incarcerated parents and their children, and one respondent noted that current photos of the children can be sent to the parents. Two respondents said that they continue to include the incarcerated parent in Individual Service Plan meetings either by phone or by correspondence, and one respondent noted that children need be prepared for visits with parents that occur within a prison facility.

TABLE 3

Suggestions for the Agency
Identified by the Caseworkers
(N=13)

Response	Number of Respondents
Advocate for caseworkers to prison personnel for better visiting conditions and preauthorized visits.	3
Train caseworkers to understand the prison system as well as the special needs of those incarcerated.	1
Parent and child can send correspondence to one another; regular telephone contact can take the place of visitations.	1
Continue to send Individual Service Plan invitations and plans to parents.	1

Only six of the nine survey respondents answer the survey question asking for suggestions to the agency. As seen in Table 3, three caseworkers suggested to the agency that it advocate for better visitation arrangements or privileges with prison personnel. Because there are so many prison facilities that agency workers are involved with, it would be difficult for the agency to advocate with particular prison facilities for better visitation arrangements and services to families with children in foster care. One survey respondent suggested that caseworkers be better trained to manage cases involving an incarcerated parent. Perhaps this would be a more pragmatic

suggestion. If agency caseworkers could be trained to advocate themselves for better services, and if they could be provided with helpful hints to assist them in managing cases involving incarcerated parents, agency caseworkers may be better prepared to navigate the obstacles to case planning imposed by the prison system.

The comments from Table 2 and Table 3 demonstrate that caseworkers are making attempts to facilitate communication between incarcerated parents, their children and their caseworkers. It is also apparent that these workers could benefit from additional suggestions to increase the number of ways that they can boost contact for these cases.

Suggestions from the Literature for Managing Obstacles

The existing literature described some programs that have attempted to facilitate contact between incarcerated parents and their children in order to prevent termination of parental rights, but most of these programs have been implemented within the prison system itself. These programs are diverse in structure and function, but their primary objectives are to provide support, education and alternative visiting arrangements for parents who have been imprisoned.

Some programs, such as "Centerforce" is California, offer sites for visiting family members to meet with imprisoned

members and also services such as emergency clothing, crisis intervention, food services, and referral to other services (Centerforce, 1993). The Children's Visitation Program at the Huron Valley Correctional Facility in Ypsilanti, Michigan is focused towards child centered visitations for incarcerated parents. Visits take place in a playroom, and non-uniformed Department of Corrections staff members help with the visits (Jose-Kampfner, 1991).

The Osbourne Association (1993) reported that most New York State prisons schedule a number of special events each year, including outdoor "Family Day Picnics", to which inmates may invite eligible family members. Another program called "Family Reunion" allows inmates and eligible family members to visit alone in a mobile home on the prison grounds for 24 hours. The prison facilities should be called directly in order to find out if there are any special events or programs for incarcerated parents in which the parent may participate.

These programs offer greater opportunities for children and their incarcerated parents to visit and to communicate with one another, but unfortunately, they do not fully address the obstacles to foster care case management identified by agency caseworkers in Chapter Two. It was necessary to develop a customized model for agency caseworkers that attempted to enhance communication between incarcerated parents, their

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

children and their caseworker and was also congruent with other case management tasks of the staff.

The existing literature offered little more than suggestions to foster care staff, and none of the above mentioned models are congruent to the tasks that agency caseworkers are expected to fulfill. One source, a three volume publication of the Osbourne Association (1993) entitled How Can I Help?, offered suggestions concerning preparation for visitations as well as ways to enhance communication through correspondence and telephone contact between incarcerated parents, their children and their agency caseworkers. These procedural suggestions do not constitute a model, but the collection of these comments together can serve as a working model to be utilized by agency workers to increase the number of ways that workers can address obstacles in case management when working with an incarcerated parent. The publication of the Osbourne Association was the basis of this practicum project, and the publication's suggestions will be discussed as they relate to the four objectives listed in Chapter Three. The suggestions to address obstacles to communication between incarcerated parents, their children and their caseworkers related to visitations, telephone contacts and correspondence are categorized below.

(a) Visitations

Most of the literature concerning visitations with incarcerated parents stresses preparation for visitations to be of primary importance. The second volume of the publication by the Osbourne Association (1993) entitled How Can I Help?: Sustaining and Enhancing Family Ties for Children of Incarcerated Parents suggested that a visitor should put off traveling to the correctional facility until the location of the inmate has been confirmed. These authors suggested that the safest course is to call the facility to find out as much as possible about facility rules and regulations, to make sure that the inmate is at the location, and to learn the visitation times of the facility. The booklet also suggested that when arranging a visit, the visitor should know the correct spelling of the inmate's name, date of birth, and as much information as possible on the inmate's identification number. The booklets also noted that if possible, the inmate should be told when a visit is planned, and if there is sufficient time, write to the inmate and ask for confirmation of the visit by telephone or letter.

The Osbourne Association (1993) suggested that if it is possible to speak to the inmate on the telephone before the visit, the goals of the visit should be discussed. Their booklet recommends that if it is not possible to make a "pre-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

visit" trip to the prison, the inmate should be ask to describe the facility and the visiting hours, or someone who is familiar with the facility should explain the entry process. Getting to know the prison culture as part of preparing for the visit will allow workers to prepare children for what they will see and what they will be permitted to do. According to the Osbourne Association, questions concerning a facility's culture will include: "How convenient is the location?", "How long and at what time is visiting permitted?", "How large is the visitation room?", "How long are the waits?", "Is there a children's center?", and "Is the staff friendly to children?". Cambria County Prison in Johnstown, Pennsylvania has written a children's booklet entitled My Daddy is in Prison to respond to the fears of children regarding the treatment of their imprisoned parents (Rudel & Hayes, 1990). Illustrations depict a prison with a bed, dining and exercise areas, a library, a commissary store and a medical office, with the final section portraying a prison visit. Booklets such as these could be helpful in preparing children for visits in a prison setting.

The next topic in preparation for a visit is to know who can visit the inmate. In the New York City jail system virtually anyone may visit as long as he or she has proper identification, but the names of visitors to state facilities must be placed on an approved Visitor Record for the inmate to

be visited (Osbourne Association, 1993). This procedure is similar in other states, and inmates may add names to their Visitor Record by providing their counselors with the prospective visitor's name, address and relationship data.

Visitors need to bring proper identification, which will include a driver's license or some other form of picture identification, and possibly a form of signature identification such as a credit card (Osbourne Association, 1993). The Osbourne Association's booklet noted that birth or baptismal certificates are often not sufficient identification except for minor children. The Osbourne Association suggested that when a child is escorted by a caseworker or agency official to a visit, the escort should also have agency identification.

Correction facilities consider visitors to be a prime source of both drugs and weapons and therefore visitors are always searched (Osbourne Association, 1993). The Osbourne Association's booklet entitled How Can I Help? explained that the first frisk of the visitor is generally a walk through a metal detector. If the metal detector rings, the items prompting the alarm must be identified and determined permissible. If the item can not be identified and publicly removed (ex. the underwire of a bra, hair pins), the visitor will be subject to a hand scanner or a pat search. The booklet stated that the visitor may request that the remainder of the

frisk be conducted by a person of his or her own gender. Visitors might also be asked to remove jewelry or clothing such as belts, shoes, jackets and watches.

It is advisable to travel as lightly as possible, and to avoid clothing and hairstyles that contain large amounts of metal or that will be disturbed by having to remove scarfs, hats, belts or pins. Visitors should avoid wearing athletic shorts, short shorts or skirts and clothing with bare midriffs and backs to visits, since these articles of clothing may be inappropriate attire in some prisons (Osbourne Association, 1993).

The booklet How Can I Help? stated that some visiting rooms have vending machines in them, but it is better to eat something during the trip or just before the visit to avoid the cost of expensive machine stored food (Osbourne Association, 1993). The booklet also reported that when change machines in the visiting rooms are working, they usually only accept $1.00 and $5.00 bills. If children are planned to be fed during the visit, workers should bring these denominations of currency along. The Osbourne Association noted that depending on the facility, exceptions may be made for diaper bags and diapers, baby bottles, combs, required medication, baby food and small amounts of money to be taken into the visiting room, but those items which are not permissible will need to be left in the car or in

a locker in the prison waiting area. As the booklet by the Osbourne Association reported, games and toys which are brought to entertain children during the trip to and from the prison must be left in a locker during the visitation.

The publication by the Osbourne Association (1993) confirmed that some facilities run televisions and VCR's to amuse children during the visit, but these items often distract the children rather than enhance the interaction of the parent and the child. The Osbourne Association noted that many prisons offer the opportunity for parents to get a Polaroid picture with their children taken, but these pictures can often be expensive (ex. $2.00 each). If activities for the children during the visits is a concern of caseworkers, they should prepare before the actual visit activities that the family can engage in during the visit that do not require toys or games such as word or math games, "Simon Says", or "Name that Tune" with humming. If the worker desires to arrange for special visitation arrangements, the prison facility should be contacted directly in order to see if there are any events, programs or rooms that can be reserved for the family of the incarcerated individual.

Finally, the Osbourne Association's publication cautioned that persons who think that they were mistreated during a visit should note the date, time and name of the officer and make a complaint to the proper administrative authorities after the

visit is concluded. Again, preparation before the actual visitation will most likely detour many of the obstacles at the facility that could occur.

(D) Telephone Contacts

The Osbourne Association (1993) stated that family members who accept collect calls from inmates must have a telephone service with long distance/collect capacity. The frequency of telephone contacts is important to the court, but the content of the conversations is probably equally as important from a caseworker's stand-point. The Osbourne Association suggested that even though incarcerated parents and children can not do many things together, they can do several activities "together apart". For instance, these authors suggested that the parent and the child can watch the same television show, and then discuss their thoughts on the program.

The members of the Osbourne Association stated that as tempting as it may be, parents should refrain from trying to guide or correct their children's behavior, since this can be a poor use of the limited time that children and incarcerated parents are able to communicate. They suggested that parents instead try to listen to what the child has to say, since listening is something that any parent can do. Other suggestions for communication over the telephone can involve the

use of games such as hang-man, tic-tac-toe, word and math games, and activities that can stimulate the child's abilities while at the same time keep the parent engaged in an activity along with the child. These activities could be utilized equally as well during times of visitation.

(c) Correspondence

The Osbourne Association (1993) claimed that when visits are not possible, letter writing can reassure children that they are loved and that their parent is safe. Correspondence should also be used to supplement contact along with regular visitations and telephone contacts when possible. The Osbourne Association suggested that the incarcerated parent can describe a typical day, what he or she eats and who his or her friends are. The booklet by the Osbourne Association claimed that in most cases, anyone can write to a prisoner, and if the envelope is correctly addressed (name, inmate identification number, facility address), it generally reaches its destination.

The members of the Osbourne Association (1993) supported that most children would prefer to get frequent mail rather than occasional long letters. They suggested that inmates can clip and send cartoons and photos from newspapers and magazines, and that letters to younger children be written in large block letters making them easy for children to read. The also claimed

that some children can articulate their feelings better in writing and drawings, and some incarcerated parents can better express their affection and remorse in a letter without the embarrassment they may feel in a personal conversation. Letters can be saved as a journal and re-read to give the impression of a growing relationship. The Osbourne Association suggested that children who can not write can have an adult "take dictation" and write the children's messages for them.

Photographs in moderate numbers may be sent to the inmate as long as they are socially acceptable, and art work and accomplishments can be photographed and sent to parents when objects created by the child are considered contraband in the prison (Osbourne Association, 1993). The Osbourne Association also suggested that drawings, poems, greeting cards (home-made or store-bought), school tests (preferably with good grades), and copies of report cards, awards and diplomas can be sent to the incarcerated parent. The Osbourne Association claimed that this may help the parent to feel more a part of the child's life, and parents with some artistic talent can send pictures of where they live, work and exercise to help the child to understand the parent's daily life. Some parents send line drawings or tracings of familiar cartoon characters to be colored by the children and returned to the parent, but if there is any question about the acceptability of a package or

correspondence to be sent to a parent, the prison should be contacted first (Osbourne Association, 1993). Palmer (1991) stated that packages are easily used for the smuggling of contraband, and so packages from the outside sent to inmates are usually prohibited by prison facilities.

The booklet by the Osbourne Association (1993) noted that children may wish to send clothing or other gifts to parents on birthdays or other holidays, but many of these items may be returned or destroyed because they are not permitted in a jail or prison. The Osbourne Association suggested asking the parent to tell the child that he or she wants something that is permitted in the prison, such as white socks, and allow the child to send these types of items instead. Non-incarcerated family members and friends can be kept involved with the incarcerated parent and the child by asking them to remind the child and the parent of significant family dates and special occasions. The Osbourne Association also cautioned that any money sent to the incarcerated parent should be in the form of a money order.

In summary, it is important to remember that the level of commitment and motivation of the incarcerated parent tends to be measured by the court and social welfare agencies by the frequency of visitations, telephone contacts and correspondences (Beckerman, 1989). Beckerman (1994) suggested that social

workers associated with these cases need to serve as case managers, educators, brokers of services and advocates for such families.

Solution Strategy and Plan for Implementation

The information and suggestions from the Osbourne Association along with other pertinent literature concerning the enhancement of communication between incarcerated parents, their children and their agency caseworker were compiled, and these suggestions were the foundation of the working model that was constructed for case management use. The purpose of the working model was to combine the suggestions from agency caseworkers, the proposals of the Osbourne Association (1993), and the recommendations of other relevant literature to provide agency workers with a guide to facilitate the maximum amount of communication feasibly possible between incarcerated parents, their children in foster care and their caseworkers. The strategy which was chosen to address the obstacles stated in Chapter Two and to fit within the goals and objectives specified in Chapter Three was as follows:

First, a questionnaire was to be developed that assessed the number of suggestions already used by caseworkers when they managed cases involving incarcerated parents. It was necessary to ensured anonymity throughout the implementation process to

encourage workers to respond honestly to the assessment tools. The check list was comprised of items related to the objectives that assessed the workers' current use of innovative ways to facilitate communication, and responses were totalled together to evaluate the overall number of suggestions presently being used by agency workers. The check list was mailed to those caseworkers with cases involving incarcerated parents on their caseloads along with a cover letter.

Next, a working model was constructed from the suggestions of the literature that attempted to enhance the number of ways that caseworkers could promote communication while managing such cases. The working model and the checklist were to be constructed together in the first week of project implementation.

The working model then needed to be sent to the administrative office of the agency and the practicum advisor for approval of its implementation. This was to occur during the second week of implementation.

No later than the beginning of the third week the working model was to be distributed by mail to those caseworkers who currently had cases involving incarcerated parents. A copy of the Osbourne Association's three volume booklet series entitled How Can I Help? (Osbourne Association, 1993) was also distributed to each office for staff reference.

At the end of the fifth week the caseworkers were to be asked to complete a questionnaire that asks for their opinion on the usefulness of the working model. Suggestions were noted, and changes in the working model were conducted at that time. Adjustments due to changes in staff caseload assignments, discharges of foster children or the release of incarcerated parents from prison were also accounted for at that time. The working model was to be adjusted and refined between weeks five and seven using the suggestions of agency caseworkers.

During the ninth week the checklist that was initially submitted during the second week to the agency caseworkers with cases involving an incarcerated parent was to be re-submitted to assess any changes in the total number of suggestions that the caseworkers were using after the implementation of the working model.

Rationale

The rationale of this strategy was that a pre- and post-implementation assessment would evaluate whether the caseworkers were using the suggestions of the working model, and the questionnaire after the fifth week would allow the caseworkers to comment on some of the working model's short-comings. The estimated increases specified in the objectives of Chapter Two were made conservatively since the caseworkers being trained

had already had some experience working with cases involving and incarcerated parent.

Because the information to enhance communication with incarcerated parents is rather lengthy in paragraph form, and caseworkers would most likely not cooperate if they were to do extensive reading in order to participate in the implementation of this practicum project, it was necessary to stream line the information into a working model that can be used for easy reference by agency staff members. The working model was meant to be easy to refer to by caseworkers for quick suggestions and helpful hints.

The questionnaire that was to be submitted to the caseworkers for completion during the first and ninth weeks was in the form of a check list for quick responses from caseworkers and easy recording for the author. Caseworkers are busy people, and so a check list format would most likely gain the information needed with as little inconvenience to the caseworkers as possible. The checklist was constructed at the same time as the working model, since the checklist contained similar information as the working model and was the assessment tool to evaluate the working model's actual use by workers.

The working model was mailed to agency workers who were working with cases involving an incarcerated parent, and the written instructions that accompanied the tool informed the

workers of the procedures for its use. Although it would have been more beneficial for the purposes of this practicum project to have the agency workers meet together one day during the implementation period for training in the use of the working model and to brain-storm ways to facilitate these cases, this approach was not utilized, since agency caseworkers are located throughout several states and traveling to a central location may have been perceived by some of the workers as a hindrance to their job performance. This could have led to resistance from the workers in the implementation of the working model, and could have jeopardize the feedback that these workers could give on ways to improve the working model.

Another idea for training agency workers to better manage cases involving an incarcerated parent was to hold an inservice training for all caseworkers in order to relay the information contained within the working model. Educating all agency staff members was not the goal of this practicum, and the presentation of a working model to the agency would not have been beneficial unless its effectiveness had been evaluated.

In order to allow the workers to provide feedback on the usefulness and short-comings of the working model during the fifth week of implementation, a questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions was submitted for completion by each of the project participants. Implementation difficulties were

discussed at that time, since some children were discharged from care and some incarcerated parents were be released from prison.

In conclusion it was speculated that this solution strategy would yield the necessary information for the evaluation of the working model while avoiding inconveniences to the agency workers as much as possible. It was hoped that new information would be presented to agency caseworkers to assist them in devising creative means to facilitate communication and contact with incarcerated parents. The completed model was expected to be an easy reference tool for workers to consult when planning for cases involving an incarcerated parent.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Summary of Project Procedures

A pre- and post-test means of evaluation was utilized to assess the usefulness of the working model to agency caseworkers. A copy of the questionnaire checklist and the cover letter are presented in Appendix B. The questionnaire was mailed to the 13 agency caseworkers who responded to the initial data collection survey and who were working with cases involving at least one incarcerated parent. The cover letter asked these caseworkers to complete the questionnaire and to return it to the researcher using the self-addressed, stamped envelope that accompanied the letter.

The questionnaire was divided into four topical areas: preparation for travel to a prison facility for a legal family visit, preparation for entrance into a prison facility, suggestions for planning an Individual Service Plan meeting with an incarcerated parent, and suggestions for increasing the frequency and quality of telephone contacts between incarcerated parents and their children and caseworker. Each section listed six to nine questions asking for a "Yes" or "No" response from the caseworker.

There was a delay in getting the questionnaires completed by agency caseworkers during both the pre- and post-

implementation administrations. Some caseworkers did not respond to the questionnaire when it was initially sent to them, and so the checklist was sent out twice to these caseworkers before the working model was sent to them. Once all thirteen questionnaires were returned it was noted that four of the respondents no longer worked with a case involving an incarcerated parent. This was primarily due to some parents being released from prison. The four caseworkers involved with these cases were dropped from the project, and so nine agency caseworkers participated in the entire implementation phase of this project.

The working model and the checklist questionnaire were developed during the first week of the implementation period. The working model gave suggestions to the caseworkers to assist them with their case planning involving an incarcerated parent. A copy of the working model and cover letter are presented in Appendix C. Because of the delay in getting the checklists completed and returned, the working model was not sent out to the project participants until the sixth week of implementation. The cover letter asked caseworkers to read over the working model and to implement as many of the suggestions as they saw fit into their case planning.

Two weeks after the working model and cover letter were sent out, the Working Model Feedback Form was sent to the

participants. Copies of the feedback form and cover letter are provided in Appendix D. Only five of the project participants returned completed feedback forms, therefore few modifications of the initial working model were made. Because of the time constraints imposed by the implementation period and the delays in getting checklist surveys returned by mail from agency caseworkers, the adjusted working model that incorporated the suggestions from the feedback forms was not re-sent to the workers for their ongoing feedback. Instead, the initial survey checklist (see Appendix B) was sent out again for a post-treatment response from the caseworkers to assess whether they were implementing any more of the suggestions offered by the working model since the initial evaluation. At the same time, the working model was adjusted and a copy of the adjusted version was sent to the Program Coordinator of each agency office along with a copy of the three volume publication from the Osbourne Association (1993) entitled How Can I Help? A copy of the letter is presented in Appendix E.

Once all nine of the responses were returned, the total number of "Yes" responses were summed both before and after the introduction of the working model. Totals were summed relative to the four topical areas of the working model and checklist questionnaire. The number of "Yes" responses for each question was used as an indication of the change in ways that caseworkers

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

chose to use or not use the suggestions of the working model. The cumulative responses to the questionnaire both before and after the introduction of the working model have been calculated and are presented in the following section.

Results

The first objective of this project was to increase the number of ways that caseworkers prepare for travel to a prison facility for legal family visits by 25 % through alternative suggestions to the staff using the working model. According to the results concerning preparation for travel to legal family visits, there was only an 11 % increase in the number of "Yes" responses to the suggestions offered by the working model. The objective of a 25 % increase was not accomplished in this section of the project.

As Table 4 shows, there were increases in the total number of "Yes" responses for five of the nine questions related to this subject on the questionnaire. There was one decrease in responses related to the caseworkers' use of telephone contact with prison counselors, but there was also an increase in the use of mail to keep contact with prison staff.

Note that the increases and deceases in this table were only by one where a difference was present. Five questions remained unchanged from the first questionnaire administration

TABLE 4

Questionnaire Responses Related
To Preparation for Travel
(N=9)

Question Number from Questionnaire and Description	Number of Yes Responses Before Working Model	Number of Yes Responses After Working Model	Change
1. Consideration of Distance in planning placement of a child	3	4	>1
2. Request written rules	2	3	>1
3. Set aside time for travel	3	4	>1
4. Monthly contact with counselor:			
a. personal	1	1	0
b. telephone	4	3	1<
c. mail	1	2	>1
5. Pre-visit without child	1	1	0
6. Prepare child for visit	7	7	0
7. Discuss visit goals with parent before visit	2	3	>1
8. Notify parent of visit dates and times	6	6	0
9. Encourage parents to use active listening with children	6	6	0
TOTAL YES RESPONSES:	36	40	

PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENCE: Increase of Yes responses by 11.11 %

TABLE 5

Questionnaire Responses Related
To Preparation for Entrance
Into Prison
(N=9)

Question Number from Questionnaire and Description	Number of Yes Responses Before Working Model	Number of Yes Responses After Working Model	Change
1. Add visitor's names to inmate's visiting list	7	7	0
2. All visitors bring photo ID	5	6	>1
3. Agency photo ID	9	9	0
4. Know procedures for visitor search prior to prison entry	7	8	>1
5. Prepare activities for the child	1	5	>4
6. Know how to file a complaint with prison administration	5	5	0
TOTAL YES RESPONSES:	34	40	

PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENCE: Increase of Yes responses by 18.00 %

to the second. There was a slight increase in the number of caseworkers who thought that a concerted effort was made when placing children of incarcerated parents to locate them as close as possible to the parent, but this number was still not even half of the total number of caseworkers who participated in the project.

The second objective of this project was to increase the number of ways that caseworkers can prepare for the logistics of entrance into a prison facility with foster children by 50 % through alternative suggestions to the staff using the working model. Overall, there was an 18 % increase in the number of "Yes" responses concerning this topic, and so the objective of a 50 % increase in "Yes" responses was also not accomplished in this area.

As recorded in Table 5, of the six questions on the checklist related to this topic, there was an increase of at least one "Yes" response by the project participants on three questions. The other three questions showed no change from the baseline to the post-treatment assessment. Note that there was an increase of four "Yes" responses on the post-treatment questionnaire to the question concerning preparation of activities for children to engage in with their parent during legal family visits within a prison setting. This is an increase from one "Yes" response to five responses. There were

TABLE 6

Questionnaire Responses Related
To Planning for ISP Meetings
(N=9)

Question Number from Questionnaire and Description	Number of Yes Responses Before Working Model	Number of Yes Responses After Working Model	Change
1. Schedule separate ISP meeting within prison facility	2	3	>1
2. Send ISP rough draft to parent before ISP meeting	1	3	>2
3. Always send ISP invitational letters to parent	8	8	0
4. Give parent opportunity to provide input by phone or mail	8	8	0
5. Know inmate's correct address	9	9	0
6. Mail or FAX legal documents to inmate's counselor to gain parental signatures	4	8	>4
7. Keep a copy of all correspondence sent to incarcerated parent	9	8	1<
TOTAL YES RESPONSES:	41	47	

PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENCE: Increase of Yes responses by 15.00 %

also more workers reporting that they make sure all visiting parties to the prison bring some form of photo identification, and more workers reporting that they know how to prepare for a visitor search prior to entry to a prison facility. Most of the participants reported knowing how to add a visitor's name to an inmate's visitation record, but only five acknowledged knowing how to file a complaint with prison administration.

The third objective was to increase the number of ways that caseworkers can plan for Individual Service Plan meetings and get legal documents signed when an incarcerated parent is involved by 50 % through alternative suggestions to the staff using the working model. Overall there was only a 15 % increase in the number of "Yes" responses in this section.

Table 6 shows that there were increases related to three of the checklist questions, with significant increases related to the questions pertaining to sending a rough draft of the Individual Service Plan to the parent before the meeting (an increase of two "Yes" responses), and to the mailing or FAXing of legal documents to incarcerated parents for signature (an increase of four "Yes" responses). There was one decrease from nine to eight "Yes" responses for the question that asked the caseworkers if they keep a copy of all correspondences sent to the incarcerated parent, and the other three questions showed no change in responses. All of the participants reported that they

TABLE 7

Questionnaire Responses Related
To Telephone Contacts and
Correspondences
(N=9)

Question Number from Questionnaire and Description	Number of Yes Responses Before Working Model	Number of Yes Responses After Working Model	Change
1. Weekly telephone contacts between child and incarcerated parent	2	2	0
2. Foster parents record dates of phone contact or mail received	2	4	>2
3. Tell incarcerated parent that mail and phone contacts are being recorded	5	4	1<
4. Child send acceptable holiday gifts to parent	3	3	0
5. Send current photos of child	6	5	1<
6. Suggest activities for child and parent to engage in during phone or mail contact	1	2	>1
7. Save letters and cards	6	5	1<
TOTAL YES RESPONSES:	25	25	

PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENCE: Increase of Yes responses by 0.00 %
No increase in responses

know their incarcerated parent's correct address.

The final objective of this project was to increase the number of ways that caseworkers may use telephone contacts and correspondences to increase contact between incarcerated parents and their children and foster care caseworkers by 50 % through alternative suggestions to the staff using the working model. Overall there was no increase or decrease in the number of "Yes" responses to these questions.

In this category of checklist questions, as Table 7 shows, only two questions showed an increase in "Yes" responses, while three showed a decrease in responses. The question asking whether foster parents were requested to record the dates when incarcerated parents have phone contacts or contact by mail with their children showed an increase of two, while all other differences in response were by only one. Two questions showed no change in response from pre-to post-test assessment.

There was a decrease in the rate that caseworkers reported sending current photos of foster children to their incarcerated parents, and also a decrease in the rate that workers said that they encouraged children and parents to save cards and letters from each other. There was also a slight decrease in the number of caseworkers who reported that they inform the legal parents that the number of communications they are having with their children and caseworker are being recorded to prevent

termination of parental rights.

There was an increase in the number of workers who reported that they request their foster parents to record the dates when mail and telephone contacts occur with incarcerated parents, but this was less than half of the nine project participants at the time of the second questionnaire. There was a slight increase in the number of workers reporting that they suggest activities for the children and their parents to engage in during phone contacts or through correspondence, but few workers reported arranging weekly telephone contacts between children and their parents.

From the Working Model Feedback Form that was administered to project participants after the working model, all five of those workers who returned this form said that they thought the working model was a thorough foundation of ideas for managing cases involving incarcerated parents, and all five said that they found the working model to be helpful. Only one of the five workers said that the working model is not a realistic view of case management tasks when involved with an incarcerated parent, but all five said that they thought the working model could be helpful in training agency workers who have had little experience with cases involving incarcerated parents to address some of the obstacles associated with such cases.

Discussion

The results of the pre- and post-implementation assessment suggested that none of the objectives specified in Chapter 3 were accomplished. The objectives were set conservatively, since it was assumed that the workers who participated in this project have already had some experience working with cases involving an incarcerated parent. Overall there were increases in three of the four sections, and these increases might have been larger had the working model been implemented to a population of caseworkers who has had little experience with cases involving incarcerated parents. The comments from the project participants on the feedback form seem to support this hypothesis. Thus the working model may be better utilized as a training tool for new employees and workers who have had little contact with prison facilities.

The responses to the checklist questions related to preparation for travel showed slight increases in the number of caseworkers requesting written rules from prison facilities, the number of workers setting aside time for travel, and the number of workers discussing the goals of a visit with the incarcerated parent before the actual visitation. There was also a slight decrease in the number of caseworkers using regular telephone contact with the parent's prison counselor, but a slight increase in the use of mail to maintain contact with the prison

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

counselor. This might suggest that contact with the inmate's counselor can be maintain through either means of communication.

The number of workers reporting that they performed pre-visits to prison facilities was remarkably low, but this is not surprising, since caseworkers are often pressed for time in their schedules. Most of the workers responded that they do prepare foster children for visits in the prison, and they also notify parents of visit days and times. Most workers also encourage active listening from the legal parents when they interact with the children.

Most noteworthy in the section concerning preparation for entrance to a prison facility was the large increase of workers reporting that they now prepare activities for the foster children to engage in during prison visits. More workers also reported knowing the entrance procedures for prisons, and they also make sure that all visitors bring photo identification. The comments of the working model do support preparation as the key for a successful visit. Perhaps these responses are reflecting the suggestions of the working model. All new agency workers are provided with an agency photo identification card during orientation, and so it was not surprising that all respondents possess an agency identification card.

Responses to the questions relating to the third section of the working model concerning the planning of Individual Service

Plan meetings with an incarcerated parent showed that most workers are now FAXing or mailing legal documents to incarcerated parents for signature, and more workers are now sending a rough draft of Individual Service Plans to incarcerated parents before the actual Individual Service Plan meeting. Unfortunately this increase showed that less than half of the nine project participants made such extra efforts to include the incarcerated parent in the Individual Service Plan procedure. However, almost all of the participants reported that they send an Individual Service Plan meeting invitation to incarcerated parents, and almost all of the workers reported that they give the incarcerated parent a chance to offer input into the development of their child's Individual Service Plan. Caseworkers apparently do not go out of their way to include the parent in the actual meeting, but they do allow input into the ISP development through correspondence and telephone contact.

The final section of the working model, which offered suggestions for increasing communication between incarcerated parents and their children and caseworker through correspondences and telephone contacts showed that more workers are requesting that foster parents record the dates when telephone contacts and correspondences are occurring between children and their parents, but slightly fewer caseworkers are encouraging children and parents to save cards and letters sent

to each other. There was a decrease in the rate that caseworkers reported sending current photos of foster children to their incarcerated parents, and few workers reported arranging weekly telephone contacts between children and their parents. There is no way of determining the reason for these fluctuations, but according to the results of this project, the suggestions of this section were not as useful to agency caseworkers as those of other section.

Implications and Conclusions

In general there were increases in the number of suggestions used by agency caseworkers relating to travel and entrance into a prison facility and to the arrangement of Individual Service Plan meetings with an incarcerated parent. Each foster care case is different, and so some of these suggestions might not be pertinent to the case management involving particular families. The lack of larger response rates might also have been influenced by the restricted time of the implementation period for this project, and so some workers may not have had ample time to implement the suggestions with their cases. Since all of the project participants did not return their completed survey checklists after the first administration both prior to and after the introduction of the working model, this too caused delays which could have

restricted the amount of time that the caseworkers had to implement the suggestions of the working model. Perhaps with more time, a larger increase in the use of suggestions could be expected.

Although none of the goals specified in the objectives of Chapter 3 were achieved through the implementation of this project, overall there was almost a 12 % increase in the number of questions from the survey checklist to which caseworkers responded "Yes" at the time of the second administration of the checklist questionnaire. This is promising. Maybe the objectives set for this project were still too liberal, since the workers who participated in this project were the professionals, so to speak, of agency staff working with incarcerated parents. In order to more accurately measure the usefulness of the working model in training agency workers, it should be delivered to caseworkers who have never had experience with such cases. The responses of participants to the feedback form confirm this conclusion.

The obstacles to foster care case management imposed by the prison system are something that agency caseworkers must learn to navigate. The working model, although lacking convincing evidence under the conditions of this project, may still be a useful tool to educate agency caseworkers and others in related fields on the job.

APPENDIX A: Initial PRA 689 Survey and cover letter

PRA 689 Survey
Nova University Practicum Project

I. Have you had foster children on your caseload within the last three years whose parents were incarcerated?
YES_____ NO_____

If Yes, how many cases?_____. If No, please discontinue the survey.

II. Have you ever experienced any obstacles or difficulties related to these cases concerning the planning of visitations and other services for the family, issues related to construction or execution of ISP objectives, communication between the child and the incarcerated parent, or any other case related considerations not common to cases where the parent is not incarcerated?
YES_____ NO_____

If so, please list those obstacles and clearly describe the special considerations involved. (Please use the back of this page if you need additional space).

III. Please list how you have addressed and dealt with these challenges in the past.

IV. List any suggestions you have for the agency in addressing these matters. (Please use the back of this page if you need additional space).

Thank you for your time and cooperation. Please return the survey to Scott Mathias at the Harrisburg office; FAX 717-541-9817.

April 6, 1994

Fellow Staff Members,

At the present time I am starting the planning phase of my practicum project for the Masters Program through Nova University. My intention is to examine how we as an agency can prepare caseworkers to better manage the diverse obstacles associated with foster care services for children whose parents are incarcerated. I am asking for your assistance in defining these obstacles that workers can expect to face when working with such cases. I would ask that you complete the enclosed survey form and return it to the Harrisburg office no later than April 13, 1994. The information collected from the survey will give me a better understanding of some of the barriers that you as workers experience as well as the ways in which you address these challenges. You may seal your surveys in an envelope and send them to the Harrisburg office, or you may FAX them directly to me at 717-541-9817. Please note that this form is anonymous, and so no names should be given. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Mathias
Program Coordinator (Acting)
Nova University Student

APPENDIX B: Practicum Project 689 Checklist Questionnaire
and Pre- and Post-Implementation Cover Letters

Practicum Project 689 Checklist Questionnaire
Case Management Involving Incarcerated Parents

I. Preparation for Travel to the Prison Facility	YES	NO
1.) Recognizing that distance can hamper regular parent/ child visits, was a concerted effort made to locate a foster home as close a possible to the incarcerated parents' facilities for the cases on your present case load?	___	___
2.) Do you call prison facilities to request a copy of written rules and regulation for visits within the facility?	___	___
3.) Do you set aside time during each month to transport children to visits with their parent in prison?	___	___
4.) Do you maintain regular contact with the inmate's prison counselor (at least once per month) by:		
a.) personal contact?	___	___
b.) telephone?	___	___
c.) mail?	___	___
5.) Do you make visits to the prison before taking a child to an unfamiliar prison facility for a legal family visit?	___	___
6.) Do you prepare foster children for visits that will occur within a prison facility?	___	___
7.) Do you discuss the goals of each visit with the parent before each visit occurs?	___	___
8.) Do you notify the inmate of the dates and times of visits prior to their occurrence?	___	___
9.) Do you encourage incarcerated parents to use active listening as opposed to trying to correct their children's behavior during communication with the children?	___	___
II. Preparation for Entrance into the Prison Facility		
1.) Do you know how to add visitor's names to an inmate's Visitor Record?	___	___
2.) Do you make sure that all adult visitors bring photo and signature identification when you hold legal family visits within a prison facility?	___	___
3.) Do you have an agency photo identification card?	___	___
4.) Do you know the procedures and how to prepare for a visitor search prior to entering a prison facility?	___	___
5.) Do you prepare activities for the children and their parents before a visit occurring in a prison setting?	___	___
6.) Do you know how to file a complaint with a prison facility if you think that you have been mistreated during a visit?	___	___

III. Suggestions for Planning ISP Meetings	YES	NO
1.) Do you schedule a separate ISP meeting for incarcerated parents to occur within the prison facility?	___	___
2.) Do you send a copy of the ISP rough draft to the incarcerated parent before the actual ISP meeting?	___	___
3.) Do you send invitational letters to every incarcerated parent for the ISP meeting even though you may think that the parent will not be able to attend?	___	___
4.) If an incarcerated parent is not able to attend an ISP meeting outside of the prison facility, do you give the inmate the opportunity to provide input for the ISP development by telephone or letter?	___	___
5.) Do you know the inmate's correct address?	___	___
6.) Do you mail or FAX legal documents to the inmate's prison counselor in order to gain parental signatures?	___	___
7.) Do you keep a copy of all correspondence you send to incarcerated parents in the children's case files in order to record the dates sent?	___	___
IV. Telephone Contacts and Correspondences		
1.) Do you schedule weekly telephone contacts between the children and the parent in prison?	___	___
2.) Do you have the foster parents record the dates when phone contacts and correspondences have occurred?	___	___
3.) Do you explain to the incarcerated parents that you copy correspondences and record phone contacts as evidence to show that the parent is attempting to maintain contact with the children in foster care?	___	___
4.) Do you encourage children to send holiday gifts that are acceptable within the prison facility and are not considered contraband?	___	___
5.) Do you send current photographs of the foster children to the incarcerated parent?	___	___
6.) Do you suggest activities to the incarcerated parent that he or she might engage in with the children during telephone contacts or correspondences?	___	___
7.) Do you encourage children and parents to save letters and cards from each other?	___	___

July 26, 1994

Dear * Caseworker *,

At the present time I am working on my final practicum project for the Masters Degree program in Family Support Studies through Nova University. The topic of my practicum project focuses on the ways that our agency workers address the unique planning considerations related to foster care cases involving an incarcerated parent. I am asking for your assistance in this project through your cooperation in completing the enclosed questionnaire checklist. The checklist simply asks you questions concerning activities that you might engage in as a caseworker when working with families that have at least one parent imprisoned. Please place a check mark in the "Yes" column if you presently perform the task identified, and place a check in the "No" column if you do not. Please respond honestly, and do not identify yourself on this form. All responses should be anonymous. No individual responses will be reported. All responses will be grouped together to gain an overall profile of responses from all agency caseworkers presently working with such cases. Please mail the completed form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope to: Scott A. Mathias, Children's Choice, 4814 Jonestown Road, Suite 201, Harrisburg, PA 17109, by no later than August 2, 1994.

Within one week you will be receiving a copy of a working model which has been developed to assist you in addressing some of the challenges associated with case planning when a parent is incarcerated. You will be asked to read the working model and to use its suggestions in your case planning with such cases, and you will be asked to provide feedback on its usefulness and shortcomings in a questionnaire that will be sent to you in a few weeks. I am relying on you to act as an expert with cases involving incarcerated parents, and the finished model will be submitted to the agency for introduction as a tool for the enhancement of case planning considerations. If you have any questions about the project, please call me at 717-541-9809. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Mathias
Program Coordinator (Acting)
Nova Southeastern University Student

August 8, 1994

Dear Fellow Caseworkers,

I appreciate the time that you have spent completing the survey checklist that I sent out to you two weeks ago, but I have yet get back four surveys that were sent out. I am sending you a second copy of the survey, and I ask that you complete it and return it to me by no later than 8/15/94. I need to have all results of the questionnaire returned before I can start on the next phase of the project. If you have already returned your completed survey form, please disregard this letter. If you have not returned a completed survey, but do have foster children on your caseload that have at least one incarcerated parent, please take the time now to complete the enclosed form. If you do not have cases involving an incarcerated parent on your caseload at this time, please call me at 717-541-9809 to inform me. I will then take your name off of the project mailing list. Remember, if you do have such cases on you caseload, your responses are to be completed anonymously, but if I have mistakenly sent you a letter and you have no cases, I want to know which workers are no longer involved in this project. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the Harrisburg office. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Mathias
Program Coordinator (Acting)
Nova Southeastern University Student

September 12, 1994

Dear * Caseworker *,

Thank you for your assistance with my practicum project for Nova Southeastern University concerning casework with incarcerated parents. The project has gone well, and you have offered valuable feedback in the development of the working model that was sent to you a few weeks ago. I received few responses to the Project Feedback Form, but I will be updating the working model using those suggestions before the end of my project implementation period. Each office will then be given a copy of the revised working model for future reference.

I only need to ask one more thing of you before concluding this project. Please find enclosed a copy of the checklist which you completed at the beginning of this project. Please complete the checklist once more, and mail it back to me by no later than September 21, 1994. Again, please remember that your responses are to made anonymously. I will need all participants who completed one initially, and who still have cases involving an incarcerated parent to return a completed checklist. If you are no longer working with cases involving an incarcerated parent, please give me a call at 717-541-9809 so that I can adjust my data collection process for fewer cases. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance in this project, and if you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Mathias
Program Coordinator (Acting)
Nova Southeastern University Student

September 28, 1994

Dear Fellow Caseworkers,

I appreciate the time that you have spent participating in my practicum project concerning casework with incarcerated parents, but I have yet to get back five survey check lists that were sent out. I am sending you a second copy of the survey, and I ask that you complete it and return it to me by no later than 10/5/94. I need to have all of the responses to the questionnaire returned in order to calculate the overall results of the project. If you have already returned your completed survey form, please disregard this letter. If you have not returned a completed survey, but do have foster children on your caseload that have at least one incarcerated parent, please take the time now to complete the enclosed form. If you do not have cases involving an incarcerated parent on your caseload at this time, please call me at 717-541-9809 to inform me. I will need to adjust my statistics to compensate for fewer responses. Remember, if you do have such cases on you caseload, your responses are to be completed anonymously, and the overall results of this project will be presented to the agency for future program development. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the Harrisburg office. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Mathias
Program Coordinator (Acting)
Nova Southeastern University Student

APPENDIX C: Adjusted Working Model for Managing Foster Care Cases Involving an Incarcerated Parent and Initial Cover Letter

Working Model for Managing Foster Care Cases
Involving an Incarcerated Parent

This working model was developed to assist agency caseworkers to address some of the unique obstacles associated with case management involving an incarcerated parent. The working model was designed to compliment the case management tasks of agency caseworkers, and it consists of ideas and suggestions to help caseworkers to maximize the amount of contact and communication between incarcerated parents, their children in foster care, and their agency caseworkers in order to demonstrate a commitment on the parents' part to stay involved with their children. The purpose of the working model is to act as a tool, a resource and a guide to offer creative ways for caseworkers to address obstacles they might face in facilitating contact between the incarcerated parent and his or her children, and it is not meant to replace other case management considerations.

1. Preparation for Travel to the Prison Facility

Prison facilities are often positioned in remote locations and they are dispersed throughout the states where the agency offices are located. These remote locations are often inaccessible by public transportation, and travel distances by car may be extensive. Extensive travel distances have been documented within the agency to be a hindrance to regular visitations between some foster children and their parents in prison.

1.) The Program Coordinator and the referring agency worker should consider the distance between a foster home and a prison facility when placing a child who has a parent who is incarcerated?

Considerations: The foster child's placement location should be as close to the parent's facility as possible upon placement in care. If available homes are close enough for regular visitation between the child and the parent in prison, agency staff will need a plan to provide alternative means of communication, and they may need the assistance of the referring agency to provide physical contact between child and their parents.

Suggestions: Arrangements might be made for children to visit their parents when they come for court appearances if the distance to the court permits the agency to transport the child to such a location. If this is not possible, the foster parents might be asked to transport the child to the location of the incarcerated parent once every three to six months and stay overnight with expenses being paid by the referring agency

2.) Call the prison facility and ask the prison to send written directions to the facility, visitations times and days, any special visitation programs for inmates and the facility rules and regulations if available.

Suggestions: Questions to ask about a facility's visiting procedures:
Ask the facility how convenient the location is.
Ask the facility how long and at what times visiting is permitted.
Ask the facility how large the visitation room is.
Ask the facility how long the wait for entrance to the visiting room is.
Ask the facility if there is a children's center available.
Ask the inmate if the staff is usually friendly to children.

3.) Caseworkers need to set aside time each month to transport foster children to visits with their parents, since these visits typically must occur within the prison facilities themselves, and prison locations can be remote and less centralized than other locations.

Suggestions: Caseworkers might want to plan visits to occur as early as the visiting hours allow in hopes that the visit could be ended and still permit ample time to transport the children back to the foster home.

4.) Caseworkers need to maintain regular contact with the inmate's prison counselor (at least once per month) to keep abreast of events within the facility.

Considerations: Getting to know the prison counselor through regular contact can allow for the sharing of information that could be useful in rehabilitative planning for the parent and goal planning for the child. The counselor may also be able to provide valuable family information that might not be readily disclosed by the parent or the referring agency. Caseworkers may want to obtain signed release of information forms in order to exchange information with the prison counselor.

5.) Make a "pre-visit", or if that is not possible, the inmate should be asked to describe the facility and the visiting hours, or someone who is familiar with the facility should explain the entry process.

Considerations: A visit to the prison without children can allow a worker to learn the prison entrance process and thus prepare the child for what they will experience before the visit. This opportunity could also be used to discuss the goals of upcoming visits with the legal parent and to meet the inmate's counselor in person. Some picture books are also available through prisons to help prepare children for what they will be witnessing during a visit in a prison.

6.) The goals of the visit should be discussed with the parent either by letter or by phone before the visit to help in preparing the child and to provide structure to the visitation period.

Considerations: Visits that are not structured can lead to bored and mischievous children and frustrated parents. It is the caseworker's responsibility to provide some structure to the visits when child centered activities are not provided by the prison facility. Parents could also be encouraged to participate in planning activities that will lead to the completion of goals stipulated on the service plan. Topics could include family planning concerns, services that need to be arranged for the child, and important dates such as preparation for court.

7.) The inmate should be told when a visit is planned via a visitation letter or by phone, and caseworkers should ask for confirmation by the parent of the visitation date and time by phone or mail prior to the visit.

Considerations: Despite what many caseworkers might think, inmates may have obligations within the prison setting that they must plan visits around. Many inmates have jobs within the prison or they attend school classes, and so unplanned visits might interrupt the inmate's rehabilitative programming in the prison. Asking incarcerated parents to confirm visits also requires them to demonstrate some responsibility in maintaining contact with their children.

8.) Parents should be asked to refrain from trying to guide or correct their children's behavior in their communication with the children either during visits, during telephone contacts, or through correspondence, since this can be a poor use of limited time. Parents should be encouraged to use more active listening when speaking with their children, although brief, positive input from the parent may be helpful in dealing with a child's behavior.

Suggestions: Parents may ask children to describe the daily routines of the foster home, their classes in school, their favorite outdoor activities, or the types of food they enjoy eating. Parents can give advice if the children request information particular to a situation, and parents can gain information about family members on the outside as long as the children are not required to act as intermediaries. Because the children and parent are only permitted to have limited contact, the visitation should be as non-threatening as possible.

II. Preparing for Entrance into the Prison Facility

Prison facilities consider visitors to be a prime source of both drugs and weapons, and so visitors are always searched prior to admittance into a prison facility. Entrance into a prison often requires preparation before actually getting to the facility, and many items are not permitted to be brought into the prison visiting room. Lockers can usually be rented in the prison waiting area to store items not permitted in the visiting room, but a deposit often needs to be left to use the lockers.

1.) Know who can visit the inmate. Inmates can add visitors' names to their Visitation Record by providing their counselor with the prospective visitors name, address and relationship. Visitors will need to know the correct spelling of the inmate's name, identification number, and possibly the inmate's birth date.

Suggestions: Caseworkers should send a letter to the inmate with the names and addresses of agency personnel who are expected to visit with the parent. The inmate can then give the letter directly to his or her counselor to be added to the inmate's visitor list.

2.) Visitors will need to bring proper photo identification such as a driver's license, and possibly some form of signature identification such as a credit card. Agency escorts should have agency identification as well.

Note: Baptismal and birth certificates are often not sufficient identification except for minor children.

Suggestions: Caseworkers should avoid bringing wallets to visits, and instead should only bring their agency identification card and their driver's license.

3.) Visitors are always searched. The first search is generally a walk through a metal detector. If the detector goes off, the visitor will be subject to a hand scanner or a pat search.

Suggestions: It is advisable to travel as light as possible to avoid clothing and hair styles that contain large amounts of metal or that will be disturbed by having to remove scarfs, hats, belts, shoes or pins. Visitors should also avoid bringing hand bags, pocket books and brief cases to the prison. Car keys are often permitted to be brought into the visiting room as well as small amounts of money. A good rule of thumb is to empty your pockets before the visit and only bring those items that you will need during the visit. Leave the rest in the car.

Exceptions: Exceptions can sometimes be made for diaper bags and diapers, baby food and bottles, combs, and necessary medication to be permitted into the visitation room, but the prison should be contacted before the visit to determine what items are considered contraband.

4.) Games and toys that are brought to entertain the children during the trip will need to be left in the car of placed in a locker in the prison waiting area. Sometimes a deposit must be left to rent the locker.

Considerations: Toys are considered contraband by the prison and are not permitted to be brought into the visiting room by visitors.

5.) Prepare activities for the children and their parent before the visit. Plan the topics of discussion, or suggest activities and games that rely on few objects or toys.

Suggestions: Games such as hang-man, tic-tac-toe, "Simon Says", "Name That Tune" with humming and word and math games can stimulate the child's reasoning skills while at the same time can provide a structured activity that engages the parent with the child.

Note: Visiting rooms often have vending machines that sell food and change machines for coins, but the food can be expensive, and the change machines sometimes do not work. It is cheaper and easier to plan to feed children while traveling or just before the prison visit.

Many prisons offer the opportunity for family members to get a Polaroid picture taken in the visiting room. These picture can be rather expensive (around $2.00 each), but can also be a valuable commodity for children and incarcerated parents.

6.) Persons who think that they have been mistreated during a visit should note the date, time and name of the officer and make a complaint with the prison warden's office after the visit is concluded.

Suggestions: Call the warden's office and report the incident to the warden directly if available. Ask for the warden's name, and follow your phone call up with a letter sent in care of the warden describing the incident and your expectations of how the situation may be resolved.

III. Suggestions for Planning Individual Service Plan Meetings

Casework that focuses on the goal of reunification is mandated by law for all children placed in foster care. The federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272) requires that diligent efforts be made to try to reunify all foster children with their legal families through the implementation of service plans regardless of the living situation of the legal parents. Case plans must be developed within 60 days of foster care placement for each family, and some state regulations require the development of an initial Individual Service Plan (ISP) for each child within 30 days of placement. Service plans need to be reviewed periodically to assess the progress of the family towards meeting the goals of the service plan, and agency policy requires that ISP's be updated at least every six months.

1.) Ideally, a separate ISP meeting should be scheduled for the incarcerated parent inside of the prison facility.

2.) A rough draft of the ISP should be sent to the incarcerated parent for review at least two weeks before the date of the actual ISP meeting.

Note: ISP's and other legal documents requiring the parent's signature must be mailed to incarcerated parents, since they can not be given to the parents during visitations.

3.) Invitational letters should still be sent to incarcerated parents to allow them the opportunity to participate in the development of the foster child's ISP.

Suggestions: Mail a copy of the ISP rough draft to the parent and ask him or her to review the document. Schedule a time to meet with the parent to discuss any goals that might be added to the child's ISP. In ideal circumstances, ISP meetings should not coincide with scheduled visitations with the children. Always follow up by sending the parent a copy of the final ISP for their reference.

4.) Since incarcerated parents are often not able to attend ISP meetings scheduled to occur outside of the prison facility, imprisoned parents can be included in this process by providing input for the ISP development via either telephone or by letter. Issues can also be discussed while visiting the incarcerated parents.

Suggestions: A special invitation letter should be sent to the inmate arranging a time for the inmate to call the agency worker to provide input on goals for the child that the parent would like addressed such as therapeutic services, family visitation arrangements or activities to be engaged in with the foster parents. If the inmate prefers to send a letter with written goals to be added to the ISP, this should be encouraged.

5.) In order to minimize time delays in getting signatures for legal documents from parents who are incarcerated, caseworkers should send these documents to the parents well in advance of when the signature is needed.

Suggestions: Documents can be FAXed to the inmate's counselor for signature, and if appropriate, verbal permission for legal matters can be gained from the parent via the telephone while awaiting written documentation. Remember to have a second party act as a witness in gaining verbal permission from a parent by also listening to the parent give permission.

6.) Letters and documents sent to incarcerated individuals should have the correct address (inmate's name, identification number and facility address) in order to assure that the letter reaches its intended destination.

Suggestions: Workers should keep a copy of all correspondences with the parent to record the dates that documents were sent and the information covered.

IV. Telephone Contact and Correspondence Between the Child and the Incarcerated Parent

Aside from visitations, three types of activities can facilitate incarcerated parents' involvement with their children and also meet the prerequisite conditions stipulated in the service plan: 1.) correspondence between incarcerated parents, their children and their caseworker, 2.) telephone contacts between incarcerated parents and their children and caseworkers, and 3.) notification of parents of upcoming court hearing dates. Incarcerated parents need to be informed of their parental rights and responsibilities and the impact that their absence from permanency planning for their children in foster care can have. It is important to remember that the level of commitment and motivation of the incarcerated parent tends to be measured by the court and social welfare agencies by the frequency of visitations, telephone contacts and correspondences the parent makes with their children and caseworker, and all three forms of communication should be encouraged with the incarcerated parent.

Considerations:

Note: Both telephone calls and correspondence are subject to monitoring by the prison.

1.) Parties who accept collect calls from inmates must have a telephone service with long distance/collect capacity. Inmates are often not permitted to call toll free telephone numbers and must call collect.

2.) Caseworkers should restrict the number of calls permitted to be accepted from incarcerated parents to about one five or ten minute call per week. This will help to limit expensive telephone costs.

3.) As per agency policy, foster parents are expected to assume $7.00 in telephone expenses per month to maintain phone contact between foster children and their parents. Phone contacts may be scheduled between the child and the parent weekly, and these contacts may need to be scheduled to occur in the office if foster parents are not willing to accept collect calls.

Suggestions to Improve Telephone Contacts and Correspondence

1.) Most children prefer to get frequent mail rather than occasional long letters. Encourage parents and relatives to send age appropriate cards and letters directly to the child at the foster home if possible.

2.) Copy all correspondence or have the foster parents record the dates on their monthly reports when letters or phone calls are received by the child from the incarcerated parent. This will permit the documentation of attempts by the parent to maintain contact with the children in care for the purposes of preventing termination of parental rights.

3.) Tell the parent that you are copying letters and cards sent or are recording the dates that these were received by the child to record the number of attempts by the parent to maintain contact with the child in order to present to the court and referring agencies evidence to prevent the termination of parental rights.

4.) Letters to younger children should be written in large block letters to make them easier for children to read.

5.) Children who can not write can have an adult "take dictation" and can write the children's messages for them. Care-givers of children who can not speak can describe the children's developmental progress.

6.) Current photos of children can be sent to parents, and art work and accomplishments that are created by children but are considered contraband by the prison can be photographed and sent to the parent in prison.

7.) Incarcerated parents and children can engage in activities "together apart" such as watching the same television show and then discussing each other's views during telephone conversations or through correspondence.

8.) Drawings, poems, greeting cards (home-made or store-bought), school test (preferably good grades), and copies of report cards, awards and diplomas can be sent to the incarcerated parent.

9.) Incarcerated parents can describe a typical day, what he or she eats and who are his or her friends. Parents with some artistic talent can send drawings of where they live, work and exercise to help the children to understand the parent's daily life.

10.) Parents can send line drawings or tracings of familiar cartoon characters to be colored by the children and returned to the parent. Parents can clip and send cartoons and photos from newspapers and magazines.

11.) Children should be instructed to send items that are acceptable within the prison (ex. white socks) when they wish to send a parent a gift for a holiday or a birthday. Free world family members can be kept involved with the incarcerated parent and the foster children by asking them to remind the family members of significant family occasions.

12.) Letters and cards can be saved by children and parents as a journal and re-read to give the impression of a growing relationship. Foster parents can be encouraged children to keep items sent to them to be included in their life/scrap book while in foster care.

August 15, 1994

Dear * Caseworker *,

Thank you for your cooperation in completing the checklist that I sent to you a few weeks ago concerning work with incarcerated parents. As I stated in the last letter, my goal in this project has been to develop a working model for caseworkers that helps them to address some of the unique challenges related to case management when a parent is imprisoned. I am enclosing the first draft of this working model along with this letter. During the next three weeks I would appreciate if you would read over the working model and would try to implement at least four of the suggestions for facilitating contact with incarcerated parents that you think would be useful in the cases with which you are involved. You will be asked to provide feedback on the extent to which the model may be useful and any shortcomings that you notice in its design in a questionnaire that will be sent to you in a few weeks. Again, I am relying on you to act as an expert and to evaluate the practicality of this working model in helping you to address challenges related to these cases. If you have any questions about the project, please call me at 717-541-9809. Thank you for your cooperation and for sharing your expertise.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Mathias
Program Coordinator (Acting)
Nova Southeastern University Student

APPENDIX D: Working Model Project Feedback Form
and Cover Letter

Working Model Project Feedback Form

1.) Do you think that the working model provided you with a thorough foundation of ideas for managing cases involving incarcerated parents?

Yes___ | No___

2.) Were the suggestions of the working model helpful?

Yes___ | No___

3.) Do you think that the working model presents a realistic view of case management tasks? Yes___ | No___ If No, please explain.

4.) Do you think that the working model could be helpful in training other agency workers who have had little experience with incarcerated individuals to address some of the obstacles associated with such cases?

Yes___ | No___

5.) What changes in the working model would you recommend? Please be specific. (You may use the other side of this form if further space is needed.)

6.) Are there any obstacles that you think were left out of the working model that you think should be addressed? Please list them below. (You may use the other side of this form if further space is needed.)

August 29, 1994

Dear * Caseworker *,

Thank you for completing the checklist questionnaire that was sent to you about a month ago. I hope that you have had a chance to read the working model that was sent to you a few weeks ago and to implement some of its suggestions in your casework with cases involving an incarcerated parent.

What I would like from you now is some feedback on how the working model might be adjusted or improved and how useful it has been for you with the cases you presently have on your caseload. Enclosed is a second questionnaire that asks for your comments and suggestions. Please complete the form and return it to me by September 6, 1994 so that I can make adjustments to the model before the end of the project implementation period. I ask for your honest opinions and comments when completing this form, and please remember that this information will only be used to improve the working model. Your responses, as before, should be made anonymously. My hope is that we will be able to develop a guide for future caseworkers who will be working with such cases, and to offer them some suggestions on ways that they can manage some of the obstacles associated with cases involving an incarcerated parent.

I will be sending you one more letter asking you to complete the initial checklist again in about two weeks, and then the project will be complete. I appreciate your time and cooperation with this project, and if you have any questions, please feel free to give me a call.

Respectfully,

Scott A. Mathias
Program Coordinator (Acting)
Nova Southeastern University Student

APPENDIX E: Cover Letter to Program Coordinators

August 22, 1994

Dear Program Coordinator,

As many of you are aware, I am presently completing the practicum project phase of a Masters Program through Nova Southeastern University. I have been in contact with caseworkers through your office who presently have cases involving incarcerated parents, and I have been asking for their assistance in constructing a tool, a working model, to help caseworkers to address some of the unique challenges faced in managing such cases. As part of this project, I am sending you a rough draft of the working model and a copy of a three volume publication by the Osbourne Association as a reference for your workers should they need some suggestions when working with incarcerated parents. This publication is the foundation of my working model. I will be sending you a revised copy of the working model after the completion of my practicum project. If you have any questions about the project, do not hesitate to call me. Thanks for your support.

Respectfully,

Scott A. Mathias
Program Coordinator (Acting)
Nova Southeastern University Student

References

Beckerman, A. (1994). Mothers in Prison: Meeting the prerequisite conditions for permanency planning. Social Work, 39, 9-13.

Beckerman, A. (1991). Women in prison: The conflict between confinement and parental rights. Social Justice, 18, 171-183.

Carlson, B. E., & Cervera, N. J. (1991). Incarceration, coping and support. Social Work, 36, 279-285.

Centerforce (1993). Annual report to the legislature: Fiscal year 1992-1993. Unpublished manuscript.

Church, G. J. (1990). The view from behind bars. Time, 138, 20-22.

Hairston, C. F., & Hess, P. M. (1989). Family ties: Maintaining child-parent bonds is important. Corrections Today, 5, 102-106.

Hinds, M. d. (1993, October 15). From bench, aid for women in prison. New York Times, pp. 19.

Huie, V. A. (1992). Mom's in prison: Where are the children? Progressive, 58, 22-23.

Jose-Kampfner, C. (1991). Michigan program makes children's 23 visits meaningful. Corrections Today, 53, 130-134.

Kemper, K. J., & Rivara, F. P. (1993). Parents in jail. Pediatrics, 92, 261-264.

Kiser, G. C. (1991). Female inmates and their families. Federal Probation, 55, 56-63.

Palmer, J. W. (1991). Constitutional rights of prisoners (4th ed.). Cincinnati, Ohio: Anderson Publishing Company.

Rubin, N. (1987). Women behind bars. McCall's, 114, 36-42.

Rudel, C. H., & Hayes, M. L. (1990). Behind no bars. Children Today, 19, 20-23.

Zelba, S. R. (1964). Women prisoners and their families. Los Angeles, California: Delmar Publishing Company, Inc.